AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION

INTERVIEWS WITH

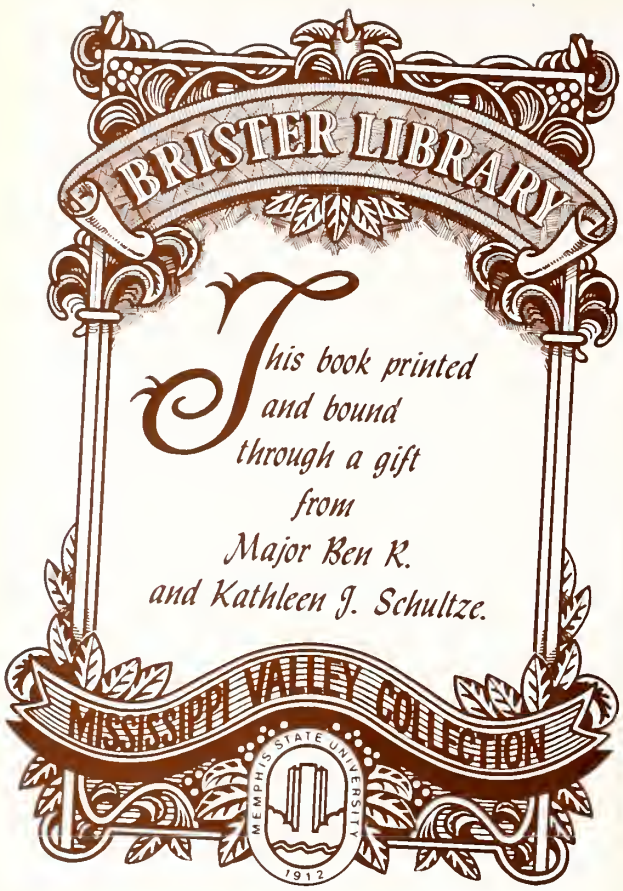
CLAUDE A. ARMOUR

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY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JANUARY 13, 1976

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PLACE Murfreesboro, Tennessee

DATE Jan. 13, 1976

Claude A. Armour

(Interviewee) (Claude A. Armour)

Charles W. Crawford

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University)

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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN CAMPAIGN AND ADMINISTRATION." THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. CLAUDE A. ARMOUR. THE DATE IS JANUARY 13, 1976. THE PLACE IS MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Armour, I suggest we start with a little background information about you and then we will get on with your part in the Dunn Administration.

MR. ARMOUR: That's fine, Dr. Of course, my name is Claude A. Armour and I was born and reared in the city of Memphis. I was born August 21, 1919 in the city of Memphis. I attended Memphis Junior Academy there and I went to high school at the Asheville Agricultural school in Hendersonville, North Carolina. I attended the Memphis Law School and Memphis School of Commerce which is now part of the Memphis State University. I also graduated from the FBI National Academy in 1947. On December 10, 1941 I was employed as a member of the Police Department of the City of Memphis. I stayed in that occupation as patrolman until September 12, 1942 at which time I went into the United States Navy as a Coxswain. I served then in the navy from September 12, 1942 to November 16, 1945. I was wounded in action in Okinowa on May 22, 1945. I was discharged as a Chief Boatswain's Mate on November 19, 1945. I returned to the police department in December, 1945. I was promoted to a detective in February, 1946. In September, 1946 I was made a lieutenant of

detectives. In February, 1947 I went to the FBI National Academy and graduated in June at which time I was promoted to Uniform Inspector. I stayed as Uniform Inspector until February 1, 1949, at which time I was appointed Chief of Police at the age of 29 years of age. I stayed as Chief of Police until Oct. 1, 1950 at which time the Mayor, Watkins Overton, and City Commissioners asked me if I would fill out an unexpired term of the then Commissioner Joseph P. Boyle. I responded that I would. This was the job of Vice Mayor and Commissioner of Fire and Police in the City of Memphis. This was on October 1, 1950.

Then I was elected on November 8, 1951, November 10, 1955, and August 20, 1959, November 7, 1963 which made a total number of years as Commissioner approximately as 18 years, 16 of these were elected by the people for four-year terms. I then retired on October 15, 1967.

I was appointed then as the special assistant to Governor Buford Ellington with a title of Special Assistant to him on law enforcement. At that time I reviewed all the criminal codes of the State of Tennessee and updated them. Also, I prepared the plans for disaster for the State of Tennessee which coordinated the National Guard, the Highway Patrol and Sheriff's offices and the police departments of this state. These plans were used in four riots in the state of Tennessee and apparently were successful since they did suppress the riots with the least amount of injury, death and damage.

I stayed in this job until Governor Dunn was elected at which time I did announce open support for him over the candidate that he was running against. I was a Democrat. After his successful election, he requested that I stay on as Commissioner of Safety of the State of

Tennessee.

In our discussions Governor Dunn expressed the desire of a change--a drastic change--in the fitting in with my personality and my ambitions of life as a professional police officer. We decided that we would have a completely professional Department of Safety not based on who you know but on what you know and not based completely on political activity. The only way we could start that policy was not to begin with it. So this administration did not fire or penalize any person in the Department of Safety because of any prior political activity in the Department of Safety and make it completely a professional organization.

We set out to reorganize the departments, set up new rules and new policies, new regulations, new procedures and we made some transfers trying to put men in the places where they would best fit the job and removing them from any political commitments, bonds or ties that they may have accumulated in the past and giving them the free opportunity to perform their duties without any fear of political reprisals.

This, I think, was a big step in the right direction. We then set up the proper promotional procedures. We did away with waivers for promotion. We set up a five-section grading system for promotions. The political consideration was never a part of hiring or promotion or transfer or any disciplinary actions. This, of course, went on for the four years of Governor Dunn's administration.

I think that this was a real change, a real revelation. I think that only history will tell the difference as to whether or not a law enforcement agency should be politically operated or should be professionally operated as it relates to the efficiency and to the citizens

that it serves. I feel like I have told Governor Dunn in several conversations, that this in my opinion, was a drastic change and I thought it was a change for the better. I think he thought this the entire time during his administration.

Politics, again to repeat myself, was never a consideration in the Department of Safety which did have the Department of Safety, the Tennessee Highway Patrol, Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Identification, Drivers Licensing and also the Financial Responsibility law which affects the drivers as it relates to insurance responsibility, and also driver's license. It did encompass nearly every citizen's life somewhere during this particular four-year administration.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you first meet Winfield Dunn, Mr. Armour?

MR. ARMOUR: I first met Winfield Dunn in Memphis many years ago. I couldn't name the year, but I'd say some time in the fifties--latter fifties or maybe early sixties or something like that. He enjoyed a very fine reputation as a citizen of that city and a political leader. At that time, as I have stated, I was a Democrat and he was a Republican, but he was a man that you had to admire even then. Later on, as I have stated, I voted for him.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had been a Democrat all your life, I believe. That is usual in Memphis up until you went to work for a Republican administration. You had no difficulty doing this?

MR. ARMOUR: None whatsoever. I had no problems from

the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party. It was clearly announced at the date of my appointment by Governor Dunn and by myself that politics would be removed and it wouldn't be a part of consideration of operating that department. Governor stuck to his guns and I stuck to mine and this is about the way that it operated.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you first talk about law enforcement with Winfield Dunn? Was it during the campaign or after the election?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, of course I guess we talked about it some during the campaign as to what my philosophy was in law enforcement and my feeling about law enforcement. I know of no statement made by him or by myself except that there seemed to be an agreement during the campaign of a purely professional approach to the Department of Safety and law enforcement in this state. I know in his speeches and talks that he emphasized the fact that he would like to do this. This was, of course, my feeling and besides knowing Governor Dunn as a person and then knowing his philosophy, I was primarily interested in law enforcement. It has been my life as of this time--about 35 years I've never considered myself a politician. The only political part I have ever played, I guess, was self-survival.

In Memphis, for instance, I ran four times, but I never did practice politics. I ran it purely on the basis that good politics was doing a good job. Each time that I announced, I announced on that basis. I never was a ribbon cutter, a baby kisser or one of these type persons that ever did fix any tickets. I was purely professional through that

time and am up to now.

I enjoyed my time with the state. It was quite a change for them and quite difficult for the changeover to take place, but it actually did and in years to come, the men that were involved and see the change that took place and look back and compare it are going to always remember that Dunn administration and will probably always wish they had the same thing again.

DR. CRAWFORD: I expect that is true, Mr. Armour. Were you able to give any service during the campaign in terms of assistance of people in law enforcement or did you simply endorse Winfield Dunn at that time?

MR. AMOUR: Well, of course, I think it was publicly a statewide endorsement. In my time in law enforcement, I have made many many friends over the state that have been chiefs of police and sheriffs and they know me and I know them, but they know what I stand for and I don't know exactly what influence you can put to that. But I know that I run into a lot of these people over the state because I was still then with the state in Governor Ellington. I've had them to say if you are for him and he likes law enforcement and he's going to make a profession out of it, I am for him. This was kind of the feeling that I found in the general law enforcement fields over this state.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know that was the important thing too in the late sixties and the early seventies for there was a lot of criticism of law enforcement on the part of some people about that time.

MR. ARMOUR: Well, we went through this era, you know, of riots in the cities of America and we had of course, our share of them in Tennessee. I coordinated all four of those riots--two in Memphis and one in Nashville, one in Chattanooga.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did they take place?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, we had one in Memphis--I think I have my dates correct on March 28, 1968--the day that they shot Martin Luther King. We had one in Nashville on April 4 at the same time. Then in May 1971, some three years later we had one in Chattanooga which was a total of four that I handled myself out of the governor's office.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you take over in your work for Governor Dunn?

MR. ARMOUR: The same day that he was sworn in office which would have been about the 18th of January 1971. Then, of course, I stayed until Governor Blanton was sworn in.

DR. CRAWFORD: About the 18th of January. . .

MR. ARMOUR: Somewhere around the 17th or 18th of January, 1975.

DR. CRAWFORD: I remember the date generally. I was there on both occasions.

MR. ARMOUR: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: What size department did you find when you took over in January of 1971?

MR. ARMOUR: Well it was approximately 750 persons. This was probably commissioned officers and probably 900 in total as far as clerical help financial responsibility and driver's license and things of this nature. During the four year administration I made many drastic improvements. One was that we did hire 40 men and assign them to interstate. At that time no one trooper had been assigned to the interstate system in the state of Tennessee, which was approximately 1000 miles of interstate. They were policed up until that time by accident if the man happened to be on it. We made a direct assignment of it. We organized at that time during the administration the five wagon tactical squad, trained them im bomb disposal, radioactive materials and how to read and monitor and rescue things of this nature that often we were called upon in the state to assist a city or a county in any type of emergency. It could be a flood, tornado or it could be a prison riot. Usually when we responded, I always wanted to be completely equipped to handle whatever the situation was. We also had a tractor-trailor truck that we designed and built to carry equipment for a hundred men should they have to be moved to a certain spot for a given situation whether it was rescue, riot, flood or tornado or what have you. Also I bought a communications tractor-trailor which has been delivered since I left which permits the state to set up a communication anywhere in the state at any location whether they have their own current or not. It housed the dispatchers and had its own generators, its own kitchen and its own laboratory facilities. It has capabilities for communicating with local police and local sheriffs as well as highway patrol and this I think, is a great addition to the

Department of Safety.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were these emergency units housed in Nashville?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, they were. We increased our helicopter fleet. We had two and we went to six. We only used four as full-time flights. The other two were used as fill-in or training in case we had repairs on the others. This of course, we used for surveilence for traffic enforcement, for searches, for rescues and aid and assistance to cities and counties over the state should they have any need for this type of operation.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe all that is still in use, isn't it?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, sir as far as I know. All of it is still in use.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you make any administrative changes in reorganizing divisions or staffs?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, we completely reorganized as I stated at the beginning. We had a lieutenant colonel and we divided the state into four divisions. We had majors in charge of each of these four divisions. Each division had two districts. We had eight districts. It sounds confusing, but it is really not that confusing. Each district had a captain assigned as a commanding officer. The major had two districts and he had two captains under him and two districts in a division. Then we established a table of organization of five lieutenants in each district and ten sergeants and that would run somewhere around 30 to 40 or 70 men per district according to its size and

coverage and its duties and responsibilities. I think that it was broken down into areas of individual responsibility.

We defined their duties and their tasks in policies and procedures. The manuals were all updated. There was a manual for every operation in the department. I think we improved our training. We had in-service training once a year--for arms twice a year for all the men. I think generally we improved the entire capabilities.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you bring everyone to Nashville occasionally for training or did you take out to the districts?

MR. ARMOUR: Of course, we had many specialized schools which usually were in Nashville in which some men from each district were brought to Nashville. Now in-service general training was done in each district level so that we would have 8 schools in 8 districts. This way we could keep the men in the district--train them in the district and I guess you would call it carrying the school and the training to them type thing. Of course, it was less expensive. On specialized training we might have 25 or 30 men that we would bring in for drivers license training, communications training and all of these specialized courses that we had, we'd probably bring two to three from each district into Nashville for this.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any changes when you were in the State Department of Safety? Did you handle about the same problems and offenses at the end that you did at the beginning?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, we probably increased or enlarged on

our enforcement patterns simply because I felt like that when local law enforcement fails to do their job, whether it be city or county, the citizen would then come to the state for help. We tried our best to honor the lines of authority. In most cases if we went beyond the lines of authority that were common to each law enforcement agency at the time, we would notify them that we were. This, of course, dealt with whisky and gambling and prostitution and things of this sort. Sometimes this would be a difficult thing for local government to handle because sometimes it was an interstate or intrastate or intra-county or inter-county. So with the transient society that we have sometimes it took the state to handle some of these things.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I know that some of your cases were along state lines and of course, some of them did have overlapping county lines. Were there any parts of the state where you had problems that you had to deal with?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, each part of the state has a different personality, so to speak, when it comes to law enforcement. We had some areas that would be involved more heavily in gambling activities. We had some other sections that were more involved in liquor activities. So you couldn't just nail it down as any one section of the state was any worse than any other or did any more than any other, but some of them would be predominant in that particular field of gambling or liquor.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe that Tennessee has a contiguious boundary with about 8 other states. Did you have special problems along with any other state area?

MR. ARMOUR: Not particularly. We found that, by and large, most of the other states if we had a problem we could meet with their people and usually define the areas of responsibility and work out a plan to handle it. I know of no time that we had a situation that we couldn't handle it involving another state.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you also coordinate your work with the National Guard? They had to be called out on a few occasions?

MR. ARMOUR: This is correct. Of course, the Adjutant General was a member of the cabinet and we had a very close relationship. We had all of our communications tied together. If we did respond to any given situation and did need the guard, of course, it would be handled through the governor who would declare an emergency at that particular situation and send the guard. We had regular working relationships with them and we didn't have any problems working together at the common cause of bringing them out to a conclusion whatever it was. This always worked real well.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about financing for your work? Did you have adequate funding from the state?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, of course, I prepared four budgets. You never did get all you asked for, but I would say by and large, looking at the overall picture of the entire state budget and looking at the legislative side and realizing their resposibilities to the citizens I feel like that we got what I would say was our fair share or improvement ratio or year to year as to expansion of services and improving services and equipment, manpower. I

would say that we had a healthy growth and one that would not particularly embarass the legislative branch as far as taxes and its relation to the citizens.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you think about the level of salaries of your personnel?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, of course, during the four years, each year they received raises. There was a constant updating of the salary structure in all areas and classifications. I think during this administration great attention was paid to paying the people a liveable wage, also expecting a day's work in return. Then in the original hiring of these people, we got to where we got a better selection of qualified people to do the qualified jobs. I think that it was well on its way to being a respectable salary while at times some of the areas were still a little low.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you able to bring your motorized equipment up to date as often as you wanted to? Were you able to keep your cars. . .?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, when we started out we had a very critical problem as far as equipment was concerned. We established a policy on equipment that we would trade it (car) every two years or at 60,000 miles. At the end of four years, our equipment was in excellent shape and we were trading something like 300 cars a year which then would give our fleet a little better than 50% new cars. Then we would use the older cars in a fade-out or less-use in the second year. We felt like this held our maintenance costs down and felt like that it held our down-time down as far as ability to

operate. We felt like the car was worth more on a trade-in at the end of 2 years or 60,000 miles than we did at the end of 5 years and completely worn out. So this, to me, was an excellent policy and kept us in good shape.

DR. CRAWFORD: You did order the special trailor vans for use?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any help from the federal government operating the service?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, we did. We had considerable help from them. In fact, if it hadn't been for them, we could not have made the improvements we made in the length of time we made [them]. They paid for 75% of this communications tractor-trailor. They bought all of our specialized equipment on the basis that we served all the cities and all the counties of the state of Tennessee.

During this four years we drew up a new communications plan for the entire state which is now in motion of being installed which should have been done many years ago. This system ties the entire state communication system together. It gives the Highway Patrol the ability to talk to any city and any county on a dial tone. It gives the city and county the opportunity to talk to Highway Patrol. It gives us the opportunity to talk from Memphis to Kingsport on a special dial tone so it tied the entire state into a network of radio communications that is necessary and will be in some years yet to come that this plan was approved during this four years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any difficulty getting people to operate and serve with this communications equipment?

MR. ARMOUR: No, we had our own. We had a crew of technicians who did all of our installation and all of our maintenance. They would go from city to city on our transmitters and from mountain to mountain on our antennas and we had our own stand-by power. But we maintained our own system.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you able to increase capability of service with persons with special weapons or anything that you didn't have before?

MR. ARMOUR: Well yes, I don't know what you call this improvement of service. We improved our capacity to handle, I thought, any situation that might arise as far as weapons; tear gas, first aid supplies, radio active monitoring devices, rescue devices, emergency medical training, or these things that relate to service to the people whatever the situation might have been. We were cognizant of the fact and we were the last ones to be called on and when we did arrive we wanted to do a very efficient job for the citizens.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you add any weapons to the service other than the tear gas launchers?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, yes, for instance we put a shotgun in each squad car which I thought with a man out by himself was necessary at times for his own protection as well as that of the public. We improved ourself on scopes and rifles and things of this sort for sniper operation or for any type of

barricading situation that might arise. We were capable of handling pretty large problems.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know you did have a few riot situations to deal with. What about emergency medical training, did you take that out into the districts or did you have special clinics?

MR. ARMOUR: Well the tactical squad I was talking about numbered 10 men. They all had the maximum 84-hour course of emergency medical training. Then all the men had a 40-hour course which is basic and not the complete program of 84-hours--but it is a very important program. That 40-hours each man had either during his recruit training or during his in-service training. Each man had his certificate for that particular type of training.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you make any changes in the training of the new officers?

MR. ARMOUR: Oh yes, we went to a complete new policy. We would usually get in the neighborhood of 20 officers if we were short. Then we would call for civil service papers and then we would then hire from the civil papers roster--these 20 positions. Each time then we would go into a 12-week school at which time they had to pass an examination every Friday to complete the school. At which time if they did complete the school, they were sworn in as troopers and then put out into the field with experienced troopers probably for several months before they were put out on their own. This was a drastic change. Before that, they would just put them on patrol

and maybe train them if they could later on, but we always trained them before they ever put a uniform on.

DR. CRAWFORD: I expect the men appreciated that, didn't they?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, I would think so if they looked at it purely in the light of their professional aspect as well as their ability to do a little better job the first day they went on the street at least they could handle a firearm and at least they knew something about the laws and the operation of the department and what we were talking about when we were talking. I always felt like it gave a man a tremendous sense of what security he could feel the first day--a better sense of security by having been through it. Of course, it was a better protection for the public and not turn a man loose on the public, in my opinion, without any training and without any fire arms training and without any legal training and expect him to come up with the answers that are necessary today.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of personnel turnover did you have? What percentage of people did you have leaving?

MR. ARMOUR: I would say we probably have 2 classes a year of about 40 which would include those that resigned, retired, were dismissed out of say 750 people there were about 40 a year, which wasn't a tremendous turnover.

DR. CRAWFORD: Relatively small it seems to me.

MR. ARMOUR: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much larger was the force when you

left than when you took the position?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, we were 40 troopers greater. I had taken another procedure. I had taken through the legislature and got permission to hire civilian dispatchers and relieve the troopers. And we had released some 50 troopers by hiring civilian dispatchers so I guess trooper-wise we increased the roll by about a hundred men.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were there any places in the state you did not have to operate? For example, did you turn law enforcement in Davidson County completely over to the Metro authorities or in Memphis to the city authorities?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, this is what I was speaking of a moment ago. We honored each city boundary and each county boundary. We primarily, our first objective was to patrol the state and federal roads and then to assist upon request the county and the city should they need us. This gave every one of us a pretty broad area of responsibility and at the same time opened the door for full cooperation should it be required. We did not infringe on local law enforcement unless requested to do so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you notice any change in the frequency for request from local and county officials for help from the time that you were with the state government?

MR. ARMOUR: I don't know if I can accurately evaluate that. I could only say that we received many requests for aid and assistance and responded to each one of them--

whatever they were. Whether this was more than in the past I don't know, but the records will show that of course, but I couldn't evaluate it. It seemed like it was more.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you think was your greatest accomplishment in that position, Mr. Armour?

MR. ARMOUR: Of course, I pretty well covered what we did. I think probably the greatest contribution that was made in those four years was the complete professional image and efficiency that was generated by the fact that we were professionals. I think the men worked hard. I think that they were proud of it. I think they had more job security. Through all this a man felt like a law enforcement officer who had professional status with public respect with all the other many things that we talked about to support him in all of these areas then I think that you could put it all under one word. In that 4 years, we professionalized a large law enforcement agency and accomplished many many individual things that were objectives, goals and ideals that we selected in the first year.

DR. CRAWFORD: Thank you Mr. Armour.

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DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Armour, what do you remember about your first cabinet meeting in the Dunn administration?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, I would say that pretty well the approach that was made I recall was number one that Governor Dunn didn't seem to be so much interested in the political aspects of the state government as he was the practical, reasonable and "what was the best for the state" approach. He seemed to, in what meetings I was in, and what advice he had and some would say, "Well, this wouldn't be too popular politically or this wouldn't work too well this way or this wouldn't work the other way." By and large, I found him to be this type person: he would usually conclude after receiving all this advice and counsel that "I am interested in doing what is best for Tennessee and that is what we are going to do."

This type of general philosophy or atmosphere seemed to prevail in each of our cabinet meetings that I participated in and I guess that was every one. At least that was the reflection I got and the experience I had with Governor Dunn. His ambition and desire was to serve the people and do what was the best for the state regardless of it's political ramifications.

DR. CRAWFORD: How often were you in contact with the governor during the time that you were in office?

MR. ARMOUR: Of course, we had the privilege of contacting the governor at any time. I felt like with his many chores and responsibilities and activities that I would only bother him on occasions that I felt like he should know about a given situation or be brought up to date about a given situation. Or I went by memorandum if time permitted me to do it by memorandum rather than take his time.

He was completely accessible to us at all times. I was liable to go two or three weeks sometimes without talking to him and then I was liable to talk to him two or three times a day, just according to what the situation was. He was always available to us. I tried in my area of responsibility to bother him as little as I could and yet to furnish him with the information that he needed as governor to know what was going on and be able to talk intelligently about a subject should it be brought up before him.

DR. CRAWFORD: What percentage of the cabinet meetings do you suppose you were able to attend?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, if I am not mistaken, I don't think I missed a one of them during the entire four years.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the cabinet meetings some people I am sure always seem to have a more active part than others. In your observation what people (you can leave your-

self out if you wish) seemed to provide the strongest leadership and counsel to the governor?

MR. ARMOUR: I don't know if I could answer that very well in the sense of the question. I would say that most cabinet meetings were held in general terms as it related to the governor's business. Now we as cabinet members did not, or most likely did not, participate in the full sense of the cabinet meeting. The governor would explain what was going on, what was happening, what his policy was, and what his wishes were, and keep us updated as far as his feelings and concerns were. Now most of us if we had a problem would handle it usually separately and with the governor directly. And as far as evaluating an individual member as to his leadership as it relates to cabinet meetings I think would not be a good thing. Most of the time a cabinet meeting was pretty well the governor's meeting as such.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much time did you get to spend in Nashville? Did you find it necessary to travel around much in the district?

MR. ARMOUR: Yes, when I first went into office I went to every district and I interviewed every man individually, which took me something like 10 months. I felt like we had a better relationship and a better knowledge of each other if we had sat and talked. I tried to open up lines of communication with the men in the various districts and various cities and towns to where he felt like: "Yes, I've talked with the Commissioner," and "Yes, I can talk to the Commissioner if I want to." I wanted to get that atmosphere and

relationship.

I traveled quite a bit. Probably not as much as I should have because you had so many things in Nashville to do. I had monthly staff meetings with the entire staff. If I went to a district, I would spend some time in the district, maybe inspect the buildings and talk to what men I could that were available during the four years. So I would say that in a period of a year I probably would be in each district maybe twice in the 8 districts a year.

DR. CRAWFORD: What impression did you get about the quality of these people when you went on service as a result of your getting around to talk to everyone?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, it would be purely an assumption on my part, but I've got to assume that when a person who works for an employer feels like that he's a part of the system that he has some way of contributing to the system. He has communications with the boss and he knows the boss and he knows the attitude of the boss and the feeling of the boss. I think he feels a little bit better about his job. I think he works a little bit harder and I think he feels a little bit more wanted and that he is contributing more as he has a chance to contribute more. I think his attitude is better because he feels like he has lines of communication and he can talk if he wants to. So I think it is generally better.

DR. CRAWFORD: As far as you know had any commissioner ever gone around the state and talked with every officer before?

MR. ARMOUR: As far as I know they never had. As far

as I know there were a lot of commissioners that the men never saw in four years. I don't think this is good. I've always been this way. I was this way in Memphis. I visited every station and every man and had coffee with them and talked to them on the street. We had a very great relationship all the time and every day.

Since I've been here at Murfreesboro, I've interviewed these men twice. "I've just opened the office and you all come any time you want to sit down and we'll talk about it if there's any problem, any criticism, any suggestion, any recommendation or something you don't like. Just let your hair down and let's talk about it."

DR. CRAWFORD: How many men do you have here, Mr. Armour?

MR. ARMOUR: We have 72.

DR. CRAWFORD: What's the population of Murfreesboro now?

MR. ARMOUR: Thirty thousand. That's not counting the university which runs somewhere around twelve(thousand). But I've felt like and I guess if I have had any success in employee/employer relationships and if I've had any respect of the men in the fact that I have communicated with them. I have been one of them. I've never asked them to do something that I couldn't do or wouldn't do. We are able to talk in the hall. We can talk on the street and we are able to talk in the coffee shop. We have an excellent relationship. I think this is healthy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, of course, that is an advantage of your having been through the positions

on patrol and up yourself!

MR. ARMOUR: [This is] very true.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've had a very successful career in law enforcement, Mr. Armour. I suppose undoubtedly one of the most successful in the state. You've been commissioner in one of the largest cities in the state. And you've been commissioner in the Department of Safety at a fairly early age. You've evidently learned a lot along the way somewhere. What did you learn, may I ask, from Commissioner Boyle? I know you worked with him in Memphis.

MR. ARMOUR: Well, Commissioner Boyle was a fine man and a very honest man and a very forthright man with no police experience whatsoever. He relied entirely on the advice that he would receive of course from the fire chief and the police chief. I guess if I have had any success and I guess I have, it has been the fact that I have tried to accommodate and to communicate, to lead and direct, and to initiate, motivate and instigate programs and changes. I've never been satisfied with status quo. I like to accept goals and standards and ideals--some of them you never reach but you are always striving for something. I don't like slovenliness and I don't like complacency. I don't like to be apathetic so I had a certain motivation myself with people and being able to communicate with people and being able to provide the leadership in which they would follow, and at the same time respect me for it.

I don't know how you would recap that in a few words, but that is kind of the story, I guess.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you go into police work?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, that is an interesting story in itself. My father was a retired fireman in the Memphis Fire Department. I was born and raised on the fire department. I had watched and lived around that all my life and somehow as a young man I decided I wanted to be a fireman. I applied for the fire department. At that time, Commissioner Boyle then was commissioner. He sent for me, or several of us rather, to fill some jobs on the police department but he pulled Fire Department applications. He talked to me about being a policeman. I told him that I wasn't interested in being a policeman and turned the job down. Then in about another month he called me back.

He said, "Now I want to put you on the police force."

I said, "Mr. Boyle, I don't want to be a policeman. I want to be a fireman."

He said, "Well, I'll put you on this provision that when your father retires, I'll switch you over to the fire department." Here I am today! I never was switched. (Laughter) He used to tell me sometimes that we'd be out together and I was Chief at the time and we'd ride by a fire station and he'd say, "See, you'd be sitting there at that fire station if I had done what you wanted me to do." (Laughter) So that was kind of an interesting story.

DR. CRAWFORD: Memphis reportedly had a very good Fire Department and a good Police Department in the time that you went to work in the forties. What had Mr. Crump to do with the development of this quality of services?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, of course, the only thing that I can attest to with what I knew of Mr. Crump--this is another interesting story in which most people would not believe. I had heard and had always heard and hear now that everything was politics with Mr. Crump. But I can attest to one story that isn't that case at all.

I was made Chief of Police in February 1, 1949 at which time I had never met Mr. Crump. I did not know Mr. Crump. I had never been a party to any political organization whatsoever. I went in Commissioner Boyle's office one day and I said, "Well, I've always heard that you had to have politics to get ahead in this city," but I said, "I don't believe that any more, but I'd like to meet Mr. Crump." So with that he picked up the phone and we went to Mr. Crump's office and Mr. Crump leaned back in his chair and gave me an illustration of two prior chiefs.

One of them had been honorable and one had not. He said, "Now, you just take your choice, Mr. Armour, which one do you want to be."

That was about the only instruction that I had from Mr. Crump. Then I served as Chief about 18 months while he was living and I was Commissioner--from '50 to . . .(I believe that he died in '55) so he was there for five years while I was commissioner and vice mayor. Never once did Mr. Crump ask of me or say anything to me except efficiency and honesty and decency in service. I can attest to that as an individual who worked with Mr. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: How large was the police force in 1949? Do you remember approximately Mr. Armour?

MR. ARMOUR: I expect it was around 400 or 450 people.

When I left it was about a 1000.

DR. CRAWFORD: It about doubled in that time then?

MR. ARMOUR: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, you had a good deal more area to take care of.

MR. ARMOUR: Yeah, we had many annexations during the time that I was commissioner. We expanded our services and our patrols and our divisions and investigative areas. So I guess it more than doubled.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had occasion to come in contact with a lot of people in law enforcement. How would you rate Memphis at the time you were there in comparison?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, I think this would be a statement that fringes on braggadocio, but I would say that the records show on the Fire Department that we had the only class 1 fire department with class 2 insurance rate with 210% deductions in rate in the world. That will speak in itself for the fire department. As for the police department, I could attest to the fact that I thought it was the finest in the country and that it served on the basis of dedication and loyalty and self satisfaction that they had performed a service efficiently and well. They were well trained and I would put them up against any department in the country during that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Thank you Mr. Armour. Is there anything that you would like to get on the record besides the things that we have gone over?

MR. ARMOUR: Well, I don't guess so. There are so many

many things that have individual points of history and points of interest that we could probably talk for days and days and hours and hours and write several books about it really. There are so many things in city government for instance, that we did and participated in as far as improvements in the city. There are so many things. I just would think this would probably be a very short recap of a lot of things that would adequately cover this interview.

DR. CRAWFORD: Thank you, Mr. Armour.